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MR. DOGGETT'S

S E R M O N.

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THE Author of the following discourse informs those into whose hands it may fall, that it was written without the least idea of its being offered to the public, otherwise than from the desk. But having preached it at Norton, a request was made, by several of the respectable citizens of that town, that the discourse might be seen from the press. A Sabbath or two after, preaching the same discourse to the First Congregational Society in Providence, a similar request was made by the Students of the College, who were present. In compliance with these requests, the following is diffidently admitted to the light, by a humble servant of the Church and Commonwealth.

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CONCERNING THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE.

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A  
DISCOURSE,

PREACHED TO THE

CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY

IN

NORTON,

ON THE THIRD SABBATH IN MARCH;

AND ALSO TO THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY

IN

PROVIDENCE,

ON THE FIRST SABBATH IN APRIL,

A. D. 1796.

AND TO A FEW OTHER SOCIETIES.

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BY SIMEON DOGGETT, jun. A. M.

TUTOR IN RHODE-ISLAND COLLEGE.

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Trust in the Lord, and do good. Psalm xxxvii. 3.

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TO THE  
*Students of Rhode-Island College,*

TO WHOM THE AUTHOR HAS  
THE HONOUR OF BEING AN INSTRUCTOR,

THE FOLLOWING

## D I S C O U R S E

IS, WITH THE MOST ARDENT  
WISHES AND PRAYERS FOR THEIR  
EMINENT IMPROVEMENT  
IN ALL KNOWLEDGE AND VIRTUE, CORDIAL-  
LY DEDICATED,  
BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,





## CONCERNING THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE.

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*PHILIPPIANS ii. part of the 12th, and 13th verse.*

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:  
For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to  
do of his good pleasure.

LET us imagine our understandings thoroughly convinced of, and our hearts duly impressed with the small value of all this world can furnish in point of substantial happiness, and the infinite value of those things which the eternal world contains for man. Let us imagine our understandings thoroughly convinced of, and our hearts duly impressed with that awful perdition which finally awaits the impenitent, and that eternity of complete happiness which awaits the proper subjects of it. And, in addition to this, consider ourselves, while in this world, in a state of probation, of trial, of discipline and labour, in order to obtain salvation, eternal life and happiness. With these great truths lying with

with all their weight, as they ought, upon our minds, let us suppose ourselves, like the astonished gaoler, in anxiety and trembling, asking this infinitely important question, *What we must do*, in this probationary state, *to be saved?*\*—To avoid the perdition of the ungodly, and to inherit eternal life and happiness? Thus considering, thus convinced, thus impressed, and thus seriously and anxiously inquiring what we must do to be saved, what can be more desirable, what more interesting to us, than a sure and certain answer to this question, which now has become every thing to us? In this posture of thought and realization, would not one, if he had them, be ready to give all the treasures of the East, and gold of the West, for a sure and certain answer to this infinitely interesting question?—To be plainly told what is *the way, the truth, and the life?* This our revelation hath told us; a revelation designed by GOD to make us wise unto salvation. How infinitely valuable to us must be this revelation! How important for us to study, understand, and remember it! How ought our hearts to burn with gratitude to GOD, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the rich gifts, and treasures of knowledge, which the

scriptures

\* Acts xvi. 29, 30.

scriptures unfold to man! And what is their answer to the immensely important question, What shall we do to be saved? The inspired Apostle, in the concise language of the text, brings us the answer: Saith he, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is GOD which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Let it be the business of our present contemplations, first, to understand; and secondly, to enforce the divine and precious truths of this passage.

Striving to understand the passage, a difficulty comes full in view, in the first essay. We are here told to work out our own salvation, and, in the next words, that GOD worketh in us to will and to do. How is this? Solemnly called upon to do a certain work, and, in the next clause, told that GOD performs the very work we are called to; and, what seems more strange, his doing the work is urged as the reason for our doing it. This mystery I shall endeavour, in its proper place, to elucidate: But I would, first, observe, that this is not a difficulty peculiar to the passage before us, but runs through the whole scriptures; and, more than that, coincides with the analogy of nature, as will be seen in its place. Numerous are the passages of scripture, which, separately viewed, convey to

is the idea, that our salvation is wholly the work of God. I will mention some passages of this kind. *By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of GOD: Not of works, lest any man should boast.\* No man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of GOD, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of GOD.* JESUS is styled, *the Author and Finisher of our faith. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy He hath saved us.* Many other passages might be quoted, which seem to carry the idea that our salvation is wholly the work of GOD. From texts, like these, many have supposed that the great work of salvation was, in every particular, to be immediately effected by GOD, and that man had nothing to do, but to stand still a passive subject, and see his salvation, which, by an unaccountable miracle, to be known only by the subject of it, GOD would instantaneously work. But let us not conclude too hastily. Let us look a little farther, and we shall

\* Eph. ii. 8. John vi. 65. Rom. iii. 23, 24.  
Cor. iii. 5. Heb. xii. 2. Titus iii. 5.

shall find as many passages, and perhaps more, which convey the idea, that the great work of salvation lies upon the hands of man; and, in some passages, that it is a work wholly belonging to, and to be performed by himself. So in the text,

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

*Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed;* and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the LORD GOD. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.\* Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. We are directed to strive, to seek, knock and ask; to consider, hear and learn; to run. In short, every possible moral exertion is, in various forms, required of us in the word of GOD; all which involve the idea that we have much to do to obtain salvation, and without which we cannot be saved. The difficulty before us, then, runs

\* Ezek. xviii. 31, 32. Psal. cxix. 9. Mat. vi. 19, 20.  
2 Pet. i. 10.

through the whole scriptures ; some parts of which ascribing the salvation of man to the grace of GOD, and others to his own exertions. In one place, it seems to be man's business to make himself a new heart ; in another, GOD represents himself as doing it for him. In one place, we are saved by grace, not by works ; in another, called upon to work out our own salvation. What shall we think of this ?—Now nothing to do, and now every thing. Is there no way to reconcile these seemingly contending texts ? Has GOD, who, by his word, designed to make us wise unto salvation, left us in this perplexing dilemma, respecting a concernment of such infinite moment ? Surely he has not. How then shall this dilemma be removed ? How shall the apparent opposition be reconciled ? Perhaps I may be wrong, but I will cheerfully give you my thoughts on the subject.

I conceive that, in order to salvation, the hand of GOD, and the hand of man, are both essentially necessary ; so fully and completely, that without the co-operation of both no man can be saved. GOD, in infinite goodness, through the glorious mediation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, must furnish the means and motives of moral improvement, give us strength, by his support, and the assistances of the Holy Spirit, to use those means, mercifully

mercifully accept of our weak endeavours, and graciously bestow upon us immortality and happiness. On our part, we must exert the strength his grace bestows upon us, use the means it gives us, and excite our desires and exertions by the motives his grace hath revealed to us. Both of these parts necessarily go into the completion of the great and glorious work of the salvation of the soul. That which was necessary for GOD to do, hath already been done by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is still carrying on by the wise dispensations of an all-directing Providence, and by the common influences of the Holy Spirit. Did mankind as punctually and completely perform the part that lies on them, they would all certainly be saved ; and it is because men neglect that necessary work the grace of GOD is enabling them to perform, that they come short of salvation.

These observations prepare the way for the reconciliation we are seeking. Both of these parts, the hand of GOD and the hand of man, being so essentially necessary to salvation, that either withheld, there could be no salvation ; this being the case, we see how it comes, that sometimes one part is insisted on, and sometimes the other. But when one part is, in one place, enlarged upon, and the other slightly touched, if at all, we have

no reason to conclude that the other is excluded. We should receive the scriptures as one whole, and all their doctrines and directions as comprising a complete system for the salvation of man. If they then, in one place, tell us that we are saved by grace, and in another, to work out our own salvation, let us conclude that BOTH THE GRACE OF GOD, AND OUR OWN WORKS, ARE NECESSARY TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE HAPPY EFFECT : And that why the work of grace and the work of man are so separately and positively insisted on is, because each of them is so essentially necessary to salvation, that without them both no person can be saved. But lest we should be led into error from these necessary parts of operation being often positively and separately insisted on, and hence conclude that one only was sufficient for our salvation ; lest we should hastily draw this dangerous conclusion, they are, in many places, both drawn together, and their connection shown : Thus in our text, the one part, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; the other, *because it is GOD which worketh in you to will and do of his good pleasure.* Moses speaks in the same style. Saith he, *and it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations*

*whither*

*whither the LORD thy GOD hath driven thee, and  
shalt return unto the LORD thy GOD, and shalt obey  
his voice, according to all that I command thee this  
day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart and  
with all thy soul, that then the LORD thy GOD will  
circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to  
love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart and with  
all thy soul, that thou mayest live.\** Here we see the  
hand of GOD and man co-operating to effect the  
habit of soul connected with life. They must turn  
unto the LORD with all the heart and soul, do  
what lies in their power, and then the Lord would  
circumcise their hearts to love him with all the  
heart and soul ; assist them to progress towards  
the perfection of duty. Similar to this saith our  
**SAVIOUR**, *no man can come to me, except the Fa-  
ther, which hath sent me, draw him, and I will raise  
him up at the last day.* And this, which is GOD's  
work in salvation, is not partial, and irrespec-  
tively restricted to a certain few as the peculiar fa-  
vourites of heaven ; for, continues our SAVIOUR  
in the next verse, *it is written in the prophets, and  
they shall be all taught of GOD.* GOD, by means,  
teaches all, and, by motives, and suggestions and  
influences of the Holy Spirit, draws all. But does  
this complete the work of man's salvation ? Hear  
our

\* Deut. xxx. 1, 2, 3. John vi. 44.

our SAVIOUR in the next words. *Every one, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* According to our SAVIOUR, then, it is GOD's part, in the glorious work of salvation, to teach and influence ; man's part, to hear and learn : Both parts necessary for the completion of the great work. Unless GOD teach and influence, man cannot hear and learn ; and though our heavenly FATHER teach and influence, unless we, like dutiful children, give ear and learn, we shall not come unto CHRIST and be saved. This same great and beautiful doctrine, our SAVIOUR, if possible, still more plainly teaches in the parable of the talents.\* You recollect in this parable, the kingdom of heaven is represented by a nobleman travelling into a far country, and, as he departed, delivering unto his servants certain talents, and commanding them to occupy until his return. At his return he called his servants to see what improvements they had made ; how they had occupied, and what additions they had made to their talents. Those who had been faithful and industrious, had duly improved upon the original talents, he proportionably rewarded : But the one who had not improved his talent, but had lived in idleness, was justly punished, by having

\* Mat. xxv. 14—30.

having that which was given him, and which he had basely neglected, taken from him. Our SAVIOUR here most beautifully figures to us our future salvation; that in order to it, GOD giveth us sufficient power, abilities and opportunities, means of grace, and bestows the reward : Upon whom ? Upon all those who improve upon these talents, as GOD intended they should ; While those who do not perform their part by an industrious improvement, have their powers taken from them ; they are stript of every thing valuable, like chaff, are thrown away and lost.

Having, according to my understanding the text, illustrated its great truths ; how it shows us the necessary co-operation of the divine and human hand to effect the great and glorious work of man's salvation : I come, as hinted, to show that this harmonizes with the analogy of nature in all temporal things.

We may trace this necessary co-operation of divine and human exertions in almost all our temporal enjoyments. How does the husbandman, at the close of autumn, come possessed with his store-houses and barns so richly filled with provisions for his household and flocks during the ravages of winter ? Not by the miraculous energy of the divine hand excluding his own exertions ;

ertions; nor yet by his own exertions without the co-operating hand of divine Providence. Not thus. But to complete this work, the hand of Providence and the hand of man co-operate. GOD gives the means; the soil, the strength to the husbandman and his oxen; he also gives the showers and sun-shine of heaven, without which nothing could be produced. But all this, though essentially necessary to it, will not alone produce the desired effect. In order to this, man also must join his exertions. He must, with the greatest care and industry, exert his strength and cultivate the soil, which GOD hath given him. In due season, he must plow and sow, mow, reap and harvest, or he will starve in winter. But faithfully doing his part, he is blessed with a plentiful harvest. And here, as in the case of salvation, the ingathering may, in one view, be styled the work and gift of GOD, and in another, the work of the husbandman; as both were necessary to the happy production. This, I conceive, is a very just representation of the harvest of souls. GOD supplies the means and motives, and gives the power; and it is man's part to exert this power, by considering the motives, and using the means. Faithfully doing this, in the great day of harvest, he will, as precious wheat,

be received to heaven: Neglecting it, be thrown away and lost, as mere chaff and stubble. I might pursue this analogy of the necessary co-operation of the divine and human hand, through all the arts of civilized life.

But I hasten to observe, in the next place, that this doctrine seems most wisely and happily suited to the constitution of the human mind.

Such is the constitution of man, that idleness is directly calculated to debilitate his faculties, both of body and mind, and to depress him below the dignity of his make. When, through indulgence, the habits of idleness become fixed, the intellectual powers lose their acumen, the moral faculties become corrupted, and the body weak and fickle. In such a state man is exposed to many vices and miseries, and, at length, sinks low among the ruins of human nature. To prevent this idleness, which is so destructive to our race, and into which GOD foresaw us liable to fall, he hath so constituted things, as to render our exertions, care and industry necessary to our obtainment of the necessaries and conveniences of this life, and the joys of the next. Did our CREATOR build houses for our convenience, cause the earth to bring forth spontaneously, and fit ready to our hands the necessaries

and accommodations of food and raiment, the excitements of bodily labour would be taken away, and we should fall into all the miseries of bodily inactivity and sloth. So also in moral concerns; were we to expect to be qualified for heaven, and to obtain the joys of salvation without the exertions of our intellectual and moral faculties, we should become careless, inattentive, idle; and, of course, our moral and intellectual powers would become enfeebled and corrupted. Hence to render us active and industrious, both in body and soul, that we might, by this means, be preserved from the degradations of idleness, and be constantly advancing ourselves towards the dignity and perfection of our nature; to render us thus active and industrious, GOD hath wisely made the comforts of this life, and the happiness of the next, to depend, in a certain measure, on our own exertions.

Again: So imperfect are our natures, that we are liable to be puffed up with vanity and pride. A proud and haughty spirit is, at once, disagreeable, ridiculous, and wicked. Indulging this spirit, man becomes tyrannical and overbearing. He soon loses a fellow-feeling, tenderness and sympathy with his brother men. With a heart calloused by an erroneous self-importance,

tance, and a face brazed with arrogance, he becomes insolent and cruel. Such an one also is liable to forget his dependence upon GOD, and so becomes irreligious, impious, and blasphemous. So pernicious is pride and arrogance, that GOD, while he made so much depend on our own exertions as to preservye us from idleness, and render us careful, considerate and industrious, at the same time, has so constituted things, that, after our best exertions, we are obliged to give all the glory to the divine hand ; both in the comforts of this life, and the hopes of a blessed immortality. By this wise constitution, the pride of man is mortified ; and yet his industry duly encouraged. Under this view of our subject, who is not ready to exclaim with the inspired Apostle, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !\**

Having shown that, to my understanding, the voice of the sacred oracles is, that, in order to obtain salvation, there must be the co-operation of the abundant grace of GOD, and our own exertions ; the former giving us strength, means, and motives ; the latter exhausting this strength in the proper and diligent use of these means and motives ! That this doctrine agrees with the general

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analogy

\* Rom. xi. 33.

analogy of nature, and that it is wisely suited to the human constitution: Having thus far proceeded, we come now to dwell a little on the exhortation and enforcement involved in the text, viz. *work out your own salvation, perform your part of the great work, with fear and trembling.* Why with fear and trembling? Because it is GOD which worketh in you to will and do of his good pleasure. A reason this, which, if duly understood and realized, would rouse all the powers of our souls, and excite our greatest anxiety and exertions rightly to perform our part in the great work of our soul's eternal salvation. That we might become qualified to enjoy the pure and sublime delights of perfected spirits, and have those delights bestowed upon us, the great GOD of the universe, through the arduous, wise, and infinitely benevolent mediation of the blessed IMMANUEL, hath revealed his will to us for the rule of our conduct, and is constantly supporting and enabling us, in some measure, to regulate our hearts, minds and lives, according to his will, and urging us so to do, by the motives of our holy religion, and by the strivings of the Divine Spirit. When we thus consider who it is that is working in us, and for us, even the great GOD of the universe, and the object for which he is doing this,

even

even our own eternal salvation, who can help fearing and trembling, lest he should not perform his part of the great work, so well as the GOD of love is enabling, assisting, urging, and expecting him to do? Seriously considering and realizing this predicament, in which, through the abundant goodness of our GOD, we all are, who can refrain from fear and trembling, lest, through negligence and temptation, he should not, so well as he might and ought, perform his part of the grand act, and by this means displease his GOD and JUDGE, who is doing every thing for him, that he might perform his part with dignity, and be crowned with happiness? In this predicament, who can refrain from fear and trembling, lest, through the temptations from within and without, some faults, some offences, in thought, affection, word or deed, slip from him, that may displease GOD, and endanger his own soul? At the liability of such ingratitude, and awful danger, fear and trembling will agitate the tender heart affected with any considerable regard for GOD and his own salvation.

Especially shall we be led to fear and tremble at this liability, when we consider a little more minutely the amazing danger of sloth and negligence in this infinite concernment.

The LORD hath said, *my spirit shall not always strive*

*strive with man.\* Agreeable to this declaration,* we see our benevolent SAVIOUR weeping over Jerusalem, and saying, *if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes.* In another place we hear him saying, *strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door.* Hence let us strive whilst the door is yet open, lest through our neglect and ingratitude

\* Gen. vi. 3. Luke xix. 42.

Luke xiii. 24, 25. The critical reader will here observe, after the 24th verse, I have, for a period, as it stands in the Bible, put a comma; and that I have quoted only a clause of a sentence in the following verse. As this might be without any considerable violence to the grammatical construction, I did it to convey, at once, my conception of the passages. To understand, as some have, the twenty-fourth verse as having no connexion with the following, is to make our Saviour utter the most palpable absurdity; i. e. to command men to strive to enter into the kingdom of heaven, because it is impossible for them thus to do! But understanding this verse in connexion with the whole paragraph, the sense is plain, and the command most powerful. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; use every possible exertion for this, and without delay: Why? Because by and by it will be too late, When once the master of the house hath risen up, and hath shut to the door.* Then shall they seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when the door is shut: Hence, that they may enter in, let them, with all their powers, strive while the door is open to admit them. The misunderstanding of this passage is, I conceive, but one instance among many arising from the circumstance of the books of Scripture being divided into chapter and verse. Though this work of concordance-makers facilitates the finding of particular passages; yet it leads us to read the Scriptures by scraps and piece-meal; and, of course, not to understand them in their connexion as one system.

The almost inspired and immortal Locke, in his *Essay for the understanding of St. Paul's Epistles*, has, with his usual great sense, touched this thought. "By dividing them into chapters and verses, as we have done, they are so chopped and minced, and, as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms; but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence, and the light that depends on it." "These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these epistles by parcels, and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions." "Then, for the understanding any one of St. Paul's epistles," continues he, "I concluded it necessary to read it all through at one sitting, and to observe,

ingratitude it be shut against us. These and many other passages convey the idea, that mankind are in danger of falling into a state of incorrigibility, or incurableness : Of their striving against and grieving the Holy Spirit, neglecting the means and motives of religion, and persisting in a course of vice, until *concerning the faith they become reprobate* ; given up of GOD to an unteachable mind, and, in just, but awful judgment, left of the Divine Spirit, to work out their own destruction. This, which is the voice of Scripture, seems true from the experience of fact. We generally see the beginnings of vice are small. In the first essays many restraints rush upon the soul. The conscience recoils at great enormities, and reason warmly remonstrates. In this state of mind, *the way of transgressors is hard.*\* But as one advances, restraints lessen. At length the clamours of vice, and of passions, grown headstrong by indulgence, drown the voice of reason and conscience, and the unhappy man plunges into every kind of vicious indulgence. Does not this look like a state of reprobation ? The word of the prophet to such is, *can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye also do good, that are*

*accustomed*

as well as I could, the drift and design of his writing it. This is not to be obtained by one or two hasty readings ; it must be repeated again and again, with a close attention to the tenor of the discourse, and a perfect neglect of the divisions into chapter and verse.<sup>12</sup>

\* Psal. xiii. 15.

*accustomed to do evil.* † Such an one seems to be lost, unless the omnipotent hand of GOD, by an irresistible miracle, wrench his hardened soul, and reinstate his moral powers, now apparently obliterated. How haggard, gloomy and wretched, must such an one be ! An enemy to GOD and CHRIST, to the divine government and holiness, an enemy to every thing that is amiable, to the happiness of man and the whole universe, such an one seems ripe for destruction, and, alas ! fit for nothing else. The voice of reason, experience, and of GOD, assure us, that the tendency of vicious indulgence is to carry us into this desperate, awful situation. If this be the tendency of even the beginnings of vice, there is abundant reason for the Apostle's exhortation, for us to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*; lest, by vicious indulgence, we grieve the Holy Spirit: Lest GOD, who worketh in us to will and to do, in consequence of our abusing his grace, withdraw from us, and we sink into a state of incorrigibility, and bring upon ourselves swift destruction. Knowing, then, it is GOD who worketh in us to will and to do, let us be anxiously concerned that we duly co-operate with him in the great work of our salvation, lest, by sloth or vicious indulgence, we ungratefully offend our heavenly Father, and grieve his Holy Spirit from us. AMEN.

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